

Your Rights as an Agricultural Worker

Washington’s minimum wage is: \$6.72 per hour beginning January 1, 2001

Minimum wage requirements and exemptions

All agricultural workers, regardless of age, must be paid at least the state minimum wage unless they meet **all three** of the following requirements:

1. They are hand-harvest laborers who are paid piece rate; **and**
2. They commute daily from their permanent residence to the farm; **and**
3. They were employed in agriculture less than 13 weeks during the preceding calendar year.

The rules **do not** apply to immediate family members of farm owners. There are no other exceptions to the minimum wage requirements.

Pay periods and pay statements

You must be paid at least once a month on a regularly scheduled pay day. Each time you are paid, you must receive a statement from your employer showing the number of hours you worked, your rate of pay, the number of piece work units earned if paid on a piece rate basis, your gross wages, the pay period and all deductions taken. A pay statement must identify the employee and include the employer’s name, address and telephone number.

Employment records

Your employer must keep a record of your name, address, occupation, rate of pay, amount paid each pay period and the hours worked. **These records must be made available to you upon request at any reasonable time.**

Meal and rest breaks

You are entitled to a meal period of at least 30 minutes if working more than 5 hours in a day. If working 11 or more hours in a day, you are allowed at least one additional 30-minute meal period.

You are entitled to at least a 10-minute paid rest break for each 4 hours worked.

Farm labor contractors

A farm labor contractor must have a license issued by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) and a surety bond that ensures payment of wages to workers. The farm labor contractor must show you the license. The contractor also must provide you with pay statements itemizing the hours worked and the rate of pay. The farm labor contractor must give you a signed form that explains the terms of employment and your rights as a worker.

Complaints

L&I has the right to investigate the wages, hours and working conditions of all employers. You may file a complaint with your local L&I office if you feel any of these laws are being violated.

Penalties

An employer who is convicted of violating provisions of the Minimum Wage Act or of discriminating against an employee for filing a minimum wage complaint will be guilty of a misdemeanor. The department may fine employers who violate child labor laws, pay period and meal and rest break requirements.

Appeals

Any person, firm or corporation may appeal an action or decision made by L&I. Contact your local L&I office to learn more about the appeals process.

Workers under age 18

Minor work permit endorsements are required for employers with minor workers and must be applied for within 3 days after hiring a minor. Before employing a minor, the employer must obtain written permission from the minor’s legal guardian and from the minor’s school if he or she is employed during the school year. These rules do not apply to immediate family members of farm owners.

The minimum age for minor workers is 14. The one exception is: Children aged 12 and 13 are allowed to work only during non-school weeks hand-harvesting berries, bulbs and cucumbers and hand-cultivating spinach. No other exceptions apply.

Hours minors in agriculture are permitted to work:

	14- and 15-year-olds		16- and 17-year-olds	
	School	Non-school	School	Non-school
Working hours	7 a.m.- 8 p.m.	5 a.m.- 9 p.m.	*5 a.m.-10 p.m.	5 a.m.-10 p.m.
Max. hours per day	3 hours	8 hours	4 hours	10 hours
Max. hours/ non-school day	8 hours	8 hours	8 hours	8 hours
Max. hours per week	21 hours	40 hours	28 hours	50 hours
Max. days per week	6 days	6 days	6 days	6 days
Exceptions	Dairy, livestock, hay harvest and irrigation: 7 days per week. 6 a.m. start in animal agriculture and irrigation.	Dairy, livestock, hay harvest and irrigation: 7 days per week.	Dairy, livestock, hay harvest and irrigation: 7 days per week. *No later than 9 p.m. on 2 consecutive nights before a school day.	Dairy, livestock, hay harvest and irrigation: 7 days per week. 60 hours per week in mechanical harvest of peas, wheat and hay.

Age 12 and 13: Can work up to 8 hours a day, 40 hours per week, 6 days per week only during non-school weeks hand-harvesting berries, bulbs and cucumbers and hand-cultivating spinach. Start and finish times: 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Prohibited duties for minors in agriculture

Minor agricultural workers are prohibited from dangerous work, such as handling dangerous pesticides, anhydrous ammonia and dynamite or blasting caps. Minors also are prohibited from harvesting crops prior to expiration of the pre-harvest interval or within 14 days of chemical application if no pre-harvest interval exists. Additional restrictions apply to minor agricultural workers under 16, such as operating dangerous machinery, working on tall ladders or scaffolds and working in food processing. Contact your local L&I office for a copy of the rules.

More information on your rights as a worker

For more information on these laws or to obtain copies of this poster, contact your local L&I office (listed as “Labor and Industries, Department of” in the state section of your telephone book) or call the central L&I office at (360) 902-5316. You may also visit the L&I web site: www.wa.gov/lni/workstandards

Family Leave Provisions

Leave for care of a newborn/family member

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to “eligible” employees for certain family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if there are at least 50 employees within 75 miles.

For additional information, contact the nearest office of the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division listed in your telephone directory. The number in Seattle is (206) 553-4482.



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Family care/sick leave

All employers who have an established accrued sick-leave policy are required to allow employees to use sick leave they have earned to care for children under 18 who have health conditions requiring supervision or treatment (WAC 296-130). Established accrued sick-leave policies must be posted.

Employers may not discharge, penalize or discriminate against workers filing a complaint about an alleged violation of these leave laws.

Pregnancy disability/discrimination

Discrimination because of pregnancy or pregnancy disability is sex discrimination and a violation of state law (RCW 49.60.180). For more information or a copy of the state’s maternity regulations (WAC 162-30-020), contact the Washington State Human Rights Commission at (360) 753-6770.